

## *International Education: “A Witness Comes Forward”*

This lesson should take from one to two 45-60 minute sessions, depending upon the number of activities chosen.

Reference Material: *Exploring Humanitarian Law Educational Pack for Teachers and Learners*, American Red Cross, 2002

- I.     **Content:** I want my students to understand the positive, long-term consequences that can result from a courageous act of an ordinary bystander (through the context of South Africa during the struggle to dismantle **apartheid**.)
  
- II.    **Prerequisite:** In order to fully appreciate this lesson, the students must be familiar with the basic rules of international humanitarian law. All student handouts and teacher handouts are taken from *Exploring Humanitarian Law* produced by the International Committee of the Red Cross, Monrovia.
  
- III.   **Instructional Objective(s):**  
The student will:
  - A. Understand the effect a bystander can have upon the actions of others
  - B. Be aware of examples of bystanders acting in situations of violence to protect life and human dignity
  
- IV.    **Materials and Equipment**  
*Teacher:*   **Student Handout #1**, “What are the basic rules of international humanitarian law?”  
World Map  
**Teacher Handout #1:** Background on “A witness comes forward”  
**Teacher Handout #2:** “A witness comes forward”  
**Teacher Handout #3:** Extension Activities  
  
*Student:*   **Student Handout #1:** “What are the basic rules of international humanitarian law?”  
**Teacher Handout #2:** “A witness comes forward”

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**V. Instructional Procedure:**

- A. Distribute copies of “What are the basic rules of international humanitarian law? (**Student Handout #1**) Read orally and discuss.
- B. Brainstorm: What does it take to do something dangerous or unpopular to help someone whose life or human dignity is at risk?
- C. Define the term *bystander* as “someone present, without being involved, at an incident where life and dignity of others are in danger. A bystander may decide to intervene (directly or indirectly) in the incident.”
- D. Read aloud to the students the background on “A witness comes forward” (**Teacher Handout #1**) or orally provide a brief overview of the background to set the context of the reading.
- E. Have a student volunteer locate the country of South Africa on a world map.
- F. Distribute copies of the reading “A witness comes forward.” (**Teacher Handout #2**) Explain that this is an actual account. Read aloud, pausing so that the group can discuss.
- G. Upon conclusion of the reading, ask students to give examples from experiences at school, in their neighborhoods, or from their families, where a bystander took action to protect someone’s life or dignity.

**VI. Assessment/Evaluation:**

Upon completion of this lesson, student should be able to explain the system of *apartheid* as it existed in South Africa and its effect on life and human dignity. In a short paragraph students should be able to give an interpretation of the following quote and provide support for whether they agree or disagree with it.

**“Our indifference to evil makes us partners in the crime.”**

Egil Aarvik, awarding the Nobel Peace of 1986

**VII. Idaho Achievement Standards:**

- 6-9.GEH.1.8.3 Identify various colonial powers in the Eastern Hemisphere.
- 6-9.GEH.2.1.4 Analyze visual and mathematical data presented in charts, tables, graphs, maps, and other graphic organizers to assist in interpreting a historical event.
- 6-9.GEH.2.4.2 Compare and contrast cultural patterns in the Eastern Hemisphere, such as language, religion, and ethnicity.
- 6-9.GEH.2.5.4 Give examples of how land and water forms, climate, and natural vegetation have influenced historical trends and developments in the Eastern Hemisphere.
- 6-9.GEH.5.1.3 Define ethnocentrism and give examples of how this attitude can lead to cultural misunderstandings.

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6-9.GEH.5.1.4      Discuss present conflicts between cultural groups and nation-states in the Eastern Hemisphere.

**VIII. Follow Up or Extension Activities:**

A. See **Teacher Handout #3**

**What are the basic rules of international humanitarian law?**

**1 Attacks must be limited to combatants and military targets.**

- 1.1 Civilians may not be attacked.
- 1.2 Civilian objects (houses, hospitals, schools, places of worship, cultural or historic monuments, etc.) may not be attacked.
- 1.3 Using civilians to shield military targets is prohibited.
- 1.4 It is prohibited for combatants to pose as civilians.
- 1.5 Starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited.
- 1.6 It is prohibited to attack objects that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population (foodstuffs, farming areas, drinking water installations, etc.).

**2 Attacks or weapons which indiscriminately strike civilian and military objects and persons, and which cause excessive injury or suffering are prohibited.**

- 1.7 It is prohibited to attack dams, dykes or nuclear power plants if such attack may cause severe losses among the civilian population.
- 2.1 Specific weapons are prohibited – chemical and biological weapons, blinding laser weapons, weapons that injure the body by fragments which escape detection by X-rays, poison, anti-personnel land mines, etc.
- 2.2 It is prohibited to order or to threaten that there shall be no survivors.

**3 Civilians, wounded combatants, and prisoners should be spared, protected and treated humanely.**

- 3.1 No one shall be subjected to physical or mental torture, corporal punishment or cruel or degrading treatment.
- 3.2 Sexual violence is prohibited.
- 3.3 Parties to the conflict must search for and care for enemy wounded and sick who are in their power.
- 3.4 It is prohibited to kill or wound an enemy who is surrendering or who is hors de combat.
- 3.5 Prisoners are entitled to respect and must be treated humanely.

## Student Handout #1

- 3.6 Taking hostages is prohibited.
- 3.7 Forced displacement of the civilian population is prohibited. What is called “ethnic cleansing” is prohibited.
- 3.8 People in the hands of the enemy have the right to exchange news with their families and to receive humanitarian assistance (food, medical care, psychological support, etc.).
- 3.9 Vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women and nursing mothers, unaccompanied children, the elderly, etc., must be given special protection.
- 3.10 IHL prohibits recruitment and participation in hostilities of children below the age of 15 years.
- 3.11 Everyone is entitled to a fair trial (impartial tribunal, regular procedure, etc.). Collective punishment is prohibited.

<b>4 Military and civilian medical personnel and facilities (hospitals, clinics, ambulances, etc.) must be respected and protected and must be granted all available help for the performance of their duties.</b>
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- 4.1 The red cross or red crescent emblem symbolizes the protection of medical personnel and facilities. Attacks on persons or objects wearing the emblem are prohibited. Using the emblem falsely is prohibited.
- 4.2 Medical units and transports shall not be used to commit acts harmful to the enemy.
- 4.3 In the treatment of the wounded and sick, no priority should be given except on medical grounds.

## Student Handout #1

### Definitions

**collateral damage:** Damage or loss caused incidentally during an attack undertaken despite all necessary precautions designed to prevent, or in any event to minimize, loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects

**hors de combat:** described combatants that have been captured, have been wounded or are sick or shipwrecked and thus are no longer in a position to fight

**civilian:** any person who is not a combatant (In case of doubt, person shall be considered to be a civilian.)

If and for such time as civilians take a direct part in hostilities, they become combatants and lose their protection.

**civilian objects:** any objects that are not military targets

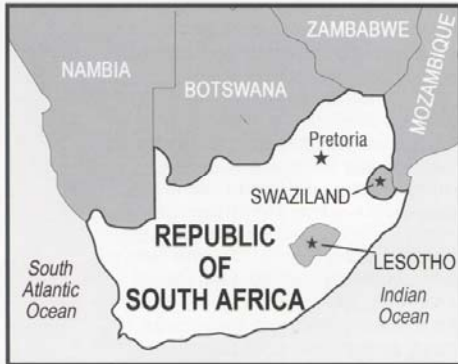
If and for such time as civilian objects are used in support of military action, they become military targets and lose their protection.

**combatant:** person taking direct part in hostilities or member of the armed forces

**military targets:** combatants and objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose destruction offers a definite military advantage.

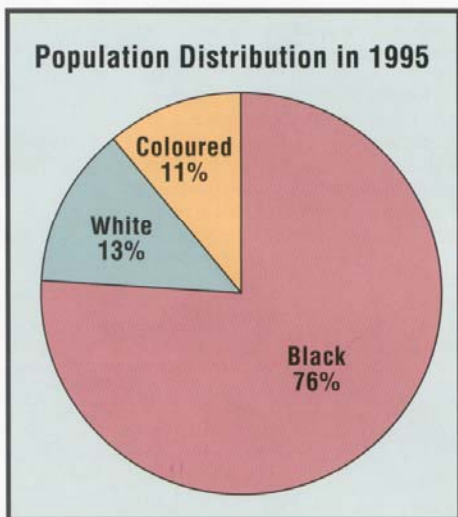


## Background on “A witness comes forward”



South Africa, located at the southern tip of Africa, is home to 43.5 million people.

Until the Dutch established a colony at the tip of Africa in 1652, the whole area was inhabited exclusively by a number of African tribes. In 1814, Britain defeated the Dutch and gained control of the region. By the end of the century that control stretched north and east to the current borders. In 1910, the Union of South Africa was created as a member of the British Commonwealth. The government and economy were designed to be dominated by whites. The government periodically created laws to strengthen white rule. Many of these laws were passed by the National Party, which ruled South Africa from 1948 until 1994. This system of racial discrimination was called “apartheid”. It used racial classifications to restrict where people could live, the jobs they could hold, their education, and their involvement in politics.



**Events leading up to the story:** The African National Congress (ANC) was established in 1912 for the purpose of achieving equality for non-white peoples in South Africa. In 1960, the South African government left the British Commonwealth and took steps to further strengthen apartheid. In the 1970s and 1980s, the South African government lost a great deal of international support. World opinion turned against apartheid in reaction to media coverage of the government’s use of violence.

By 1990, it became clear that apartheid was doomed. Major anti-apartheid organizations like the ANC were legalized and their leaders were released from prison or allowed to return from exile. Much of the legislation establishing apartheid was repealed. The government and major political parties worked on creating a new

constitution and negotiated a process for the institutionalization of majority rule. Negotiations broke down in June 1992 as the ANC accused the government of involvement in attacks against its supporters. The process began again in March 1993 after the government acknowledged the police’s responsibility to protect ANC members. Apartheid was abolished and the first free elections were held in 1994.

**Sources:**

Rita M. Byrnes., editor, South Africa: A country study, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC: May 1996.

Online edition: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/zatoc.html>

## Exploration 1A: What can bystanders do?

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Resource 1  
2 of 6

# A witness comes forward

In April 1993 South Africa's struggle against apartheid was coming to a victorious end, without the bloodshed that had been feared and expected. Nelson Mandela, President of the African National Congress (ANC), widely acclaimed for his spiritual leadership of the struggle, had been freed from 27 years in prison and with President F.W. de Klerk was negotiating a process for transition to majority rule.

On 10 April, Chris Hani, a respected leader of the ANC was assassinated. He had been shot at point-blank range in front of his home in Boksburg, Johannesburg. The perpetrators acknowledged that they chose Hani as a target because his death was most likely to plunge the country into chaos, allowing the right wing to seize power.

The following is taken from Mandela's account of that event in his autobiography:

*Chris' death was a blow to me personally and to the movement. He was a great hero among the youth of South Africa, a man who spoke their language and to whom they listened. If anyone could mobilize the unruly youth behind a negotiated settlement, it was Chris.*

*The country was fragile. There were concerns that Chris Hani's death might trigger a racial war, with the youth deciding that their hero should become a martyr for whom they would lay down their own lives ... The murder was an act of mad desperation, an attempt to derail the negotiation process.*

That day, however, a woman phoned the police with the killer's licence-plate number. It happened that this woman was white.

Mandela was asked to address the nation by radio that night. In his autobiography, he reports what he said:

*I said that the process of peace and negotiations could not be halted. With all the authority at my command I said:*

*I appeal to all our people to remain calm and to honour the memory of Chris Hani by remaining a disciplined force for peace... Tonight I am reaching out to every single South African, black and white, from the very depths of my being. A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation now teeters on the brink of disaster. A white woman (...) risked her life so that we may know, and bring to justice this assassin.*

The assassination failed to produce chaos and racial war, and the process of peace and negotiations continued.

**Question: What risk did the woman take in coming forward?**

Adapted from Nelson Mandela, *Long walk to freedom: The autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, Back Bay Books, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1994.

## The humanitarian perspective

Photo: Adill Bradilow / AP



## Teacher Handout 3

### Extension activities

#### Research and collect stories

Research stories from your history, legends and religion to find accounts of bystanders who acted to protect someone they were not expected to protect.

➤ What made them act? What was the result?

Illustrate and put together a book or exhibit of the collected stories

#### Sayings

Give your own interpretation of the following line from the 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sufi poet Jelaluddin Rumi.

*Be a lamp, or a lifeboat, or a ladder.*

You can interpret the saying in a drawing, write about it or compose a song based on it.

Use brainstorming to gather lines or sayings that you have heard that reflect the humanitarian point of view. Explain how each saying can relate to the humanitarian point of view. For instance, when a learner proposed “Monkey see, monkey do”, other learners justified its inclusion on the grounds that people follow other people’s example, and that goes for humanitarian behaviour as well as any other type of behaviour.

Collect (from family and other sources) traditional sayings that reflect the humanitarian point of view. Collaborate on making a booklet or collage from the sayings.

*Instead of seeking vengeance, set a good example.*

- a student from Djibouti

*Mercy holds the world together.*

- a student from Thailand

*A “Hadith” by the Prophet says: Whoever of you sees an unjust act should intervene to change it by hand, if he cannot then by his tongue, and if he cannot then with his heart and this is the minimum.*

- a student from Egypt

*Even a hunter cannot kill a bird that comes to him for refuge.*

- Japanese proverb

#### Trace the consequences

Analyse the impact of bystanders on the protection of human life and dignity.

Choose one of the following and make a diagram to show a web of chain reactions.

### Teacher Handout 3

- An act you did as a bystander on behalf of someone else
- An act someone else did as a bystander

Write the action of the bystander in a circle in the middle of the web. Then show the impact of that action by connecting the circle to as many other people and events as you can think of.